

Spark Gap

Vol. 28, Issue 4, April 2011 *MARC - Serving Central Indiana Communities for twenty-seven Years*

Hams Provide Communications Support During West Texas Wildfires

On April 9 at 4:15 PM (CDT), ARRL West Texas District 5 Emergency Coordinator Bob Ward, WA5ROE, received a call from Jeff Davis County (Texas) Fire Marshal Stewart Billingsley, N5HXZ. Billingsley informed Ward that a fire had begun in the West Texas town of Marfa and was rapidly approaching Fort Davis, 22 miles to the northeast.

“Stewart asked me to call the National Weather Service to get it on the alert system, as well as the AM and FM radio stations in Alpine,” Ward told the ARRL. “He wanted it broadcast over the radio stations that he needed the Mano Prieto and Fort Davis Estates sub-divisions evacuated. People in the area know that when an emergency happens, they need to tune into these stations for the latest information. This was the Rock House Fire. At the same time, another fire, the Roper Fire, had started on the eastern edge of Alpine.”

Ward contacted the NWS and the radio stations and then put out a call on 2 meters, asking for Alpine amateurs to report to the Emergency Operations Center in Brewster County. “When I arrived, ARRL Brewster County Emergency Coordinator David Cockrum, N5DO, and Brewster County Emergency Management Coordinator Tom Santry were there. Tom asked us to activate a net on the Big Bend Amateur Radio Club repeater system.”

Ward said that a ham was dispatched to Jeff Davis County -- 26 miles to the northwest -- to assist ARRL Jeff Davis County Emergency Coordinator Jim Fowler, KD5KBU: “Jim, in addition to being the EC for Jeff Davis County, is also with their fire department, so he was dealing with a lot of things. We also sent hams to assist at the Alpine Police Department and the dispatch in Brewster County, as well as at the radio stations. Due to the fire, there was no electricity or phone service, so hams at the police department and dispatch handled traffic. The ham at the radio station received messages from the Emergency Operations Center in Brewster County concerning public safety, highway closures and evacuations to be broadcast over the air.”

Ward explained that later that day, the repeater system was linked to the West Texas repeater system to handle traffic for the American Red Cross. “We also provided phone patches for American Electric Power, the local electric company, as they came in to install a large generator to supply power to the Fort Davis area,” he said. “We finally secured our net at noon on April 11.”

As of April 13, the 30,000 acre Roper Fire is completely contained, but the 108,000 acre Rock House Fire is only 60 percent contained. According to Terry Allison, K5TDA, a firefighter in Alpine, about 30 houses and two businesses in Fort Davis were destroyed by the fire, while two houses in Marfa were destroyed. County, State and Federal firefighters are in control of the operation and no further Amateur Radio involvement has been requested.

..... ARRL Letter for 04/14/2011

From the President:

I usually write something time sensitive or topical for the newsletter, but I wanted to do something a little different this month. It seems we have a lot of Technician Class members who operate mainly on VHF/UHF FM. If you are in that category, you are missing out on a great deal of fun and not experiencing the true excitement of being a radio amateur. If public service is your bag, that's fine, but that doesn't mean you can't mix some fun along with it. For very little expense or operating expertise, you could be talking with (working) all around the U.S. and the world DXing on ten meters. New Generals might want to also explore other HF bands.

This time of year the higher HF bands at 10/12/15/17 meters are awakening more and more during the daylight hours. Lately, I have heard Europe, as well as South and Central America on a regular basis. The good news is it takes very little power and only a very basic antenna to work them when conditions are right.

If you don't have an antenna for the 10 meter band, a simple dipole works wonders. For the Technician SSB portion of the 10 meter band, the antenna is only 16.5 feet long overall. Construct the dipole with 8.25 feet of insulated stranded copper wire on each side, separated by a "tee" insulator and fed with RG-8 or RG-58 coax. Solder the shield to one side and the center conductor to the other. Hang the antenna as high as possible between a couple of trees or supports, or it will fit easily in most attic spaces.

Now all you need is a transceiver that covers ten meters. You don't need a lot of power, 50 to 100 watts is plenty, and even at 5 watts you can make contacts when the band is open. Band conditions and timing are everything. Reasonably priced used rigs are plentiful on-line and at hamfests, but buyer beware. You are better off buying from someone you know who can lend assistance if you need it.

The club's technical committee is available to help with advice, guidance, and sometimes grunt labor to assist with getting our members on the air. If you have questions, someone is always available to help out. Get out there and expand your radio horizons, you will be amazed at the fun you have been missing.

---Steve K9DY



Sometimes you need help chasing down good DX!



Mike Koss W9SU

Amateur Radio Operators who knew and respected Mike Koss, W9SU came from near and far to New Whiteland, Indiana to pay their last respects. Mike's friends returned to his Hoosier home April 2nd for the viewing and brief service to commemorate the life and times of long time DX'er Mike Koss. They came from Central Indiana and as far south as southern Florida. One close friend made the journey from the rugged mountains of western Colorado. Their adventures into the mountains to work a little DX made for lasting memories and interesting tales while camping and working remote radio operations.

Mike Koss passed away March 28th from an apparent heart attack. According to Brian Smith, W9IND, Mike was found in his northeast side workshop where he built RF lightning arrestors and other similar products for his company, Industrial Communication Engineering. His products were used around the world in Amateur Radio and commercial radio stations as well. Locally Mike was well known for building the W9IMS special event station. Each year, during the Indianapolis 500, the Brick Yard 400 and Moto GP, dozens of area hams put on headsets and keyed down to give the speedway a voice heard around the world.

In 1987 Mike's amplified HF equipment and multi-tower antenna farm burned up the airwaves as the W87PAX. The two week special event station commemorated the Pan American Games being held in downtown Indianapolis. In May of 2009 the Mid-State ARC used the station to log nearly 800 QSO's in twelve hours while celebrating our 25th Anniversary as an Amateur Radio club.

Last year Mike spearheaded a volunteer project that cleaned up and repainted the USS *Indianapolis* Memorial in downtown Indianapolis. Just in time for the survivors' reunion. His contributions to Amateur Radio were recognized in July 2005 when he received the prestigious IRCC Technical Excellence Award. Mike's accomplishments and generosity will be long remembered. At the age of 58, Mike Koss is SK.

.... Jack Parker W8ISH

RESCUE RADIO: SOCAL HAMS PROVIDE AID IN ANOTHER HOSPITAL PHONE OUTAGE

Two weeks ago, Newsline told you about a phone failure at Childrens Hospital of Orange County and how hams quickly responded to help. Well, it's happened again at another hospital there. Newsline's Joe Moell K0OV is back to tell you the details and to explain why he's not surprised at another outage.

A group pager alert at 10:28 AM on April 5 brought members of the Hospital Disaster Support Communications System to Saddleback Hospital in Laguna Hills after a digital equipment failure caused the inbound and outbound trunk lines to become inoperative. Again, the phone number of HDSCS net control was given to Orange County Communications agency so that ambulance companies and other hospitals could contact Saddleback Hospital via ham radio. The outage lasted until 6 PM that day.

Of the 115 times that HDSCS has been activated for communications problems in Orange County hospitals, this was the 85th time that it was due to switchgear or cable failure. Does it seem to you that Orange County has an unusual number of hospital phone failures? Well, not really. HDSCS leader April Moell, WA6OPS, talks to a lot of hospital employees and disaster planners around the country who tell her that they have their share of phone outages too. The causes range from accidentally cut cables to computer failures and power surges. She says that the difference is that most ham emergency groups around the country don't prepare and plan to help in these single-hospital incidents. They don't set up 24-hour alerting plans for the hospitals to use to contact them quickly when phones go down, so they never get the call. Often they don't have portable stations so they can go into the individual hospital units such as the Emergency Department, Pharmacy and so forth to provide unit-to-unit communications.

When a nurse on a hospital unit has an urgent need to contact a patient's physician at his office or home, but the phones are down because switchgear has failed or backhoe has dug up the cables, that's just as severe an emergency as it would be after a hurricane or tornado. So HDSCS plans to help hospitals whenever they need it, not just when all else fails in a big natural disaster.

Orange County hospitals appreciate HDSCS because hams come when they call and they can connect their staff members to the outside, no matter the cause of the communications outage. WA6OPS thinks that other ARES groups around the country should adopt this hospital support model, which includes robust alerting plans for each hospital, regular meetings with the hospital disaster planners, and ready-to-respond members who are trained in the special terminology and communications needs of medical facilities.

More information about HDSCS and its secrets of success are at the Web site of the Hospital Disaster Support Communications System, or HDSCS.ORG. Another time when ham radio is there when normal lines of communications fail.

.... ARNewsline Report 1757 – April 15, 2011

Editor's note: This is a good example of the service Amateur Radio provides to the public.

2011 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

APRIL 2011

16 MARC Meeting - 8:00 AM, Franklin, IN

Located at the Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN. VEC Testing after the meeting (approx. 9:30 am to 11:00 am)

MAY 2011

21 MARC Meeting - 8:00 AM, Franklin, IN

Located at the Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN. VEC Testing after the meeting (approx. 9:30 am to 11:00 am)

20 – 22 HAMVENTION - Hara Arena, Dayton, Ohio

2011 JUNE

18 MARC Meeting - 8:00 AM, Franklin, IN

Located at the Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN. VEC Testing after the meeting (approx. 9:30 am to 11:00 am)

25 ARRL Field Day ... location to be determined

2011 Indiana Hamfests

March 5	Dugger Hamfest , Dugger Community Building, South Hicum Street (just off State Road 54) Dugger, IN 47848, http://www.kc9ak.org/hamfest.html
March 26	Columbus Hamfest Location: Bartholomew Co. Fairgrounds Columbus, IN Sponsor: Columbus Amateur Radio Club http://www.qsl.net/carc
April 16	North Central Indiana Hamfest , Miami County 4-H Fairground, Miami County Road 200 North & Mexico Road, Peru IN http://www.nci-hamfest.net/
June 11	South Bend Indiana Hamfest , Elks Club, 3535 E. McKinley Avenue, South Bend, IN http://www.w9ab.org/
July 9	Indianapolis Hamfest , Camp Sertoma, Indianapolis, http://www.indyhamfest.com
Nov. 19-20	Indiana State Convention, Fort Wayne Hamfest & Computer Expo , Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, Fort Wayne, http://www.fortwaynehamfest.com



MID-STATE AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

The Mid-State Amateur Radio Club meets the THIRD SATURDAY of each month in the basement of the Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, Indiana 46131.

See our website, www.midstatehams.org, for maps on how to get to our meeting.

WA9RDF
Repeater
146.835/
146.235 MHz
151.4 Hz PL Tone

Club Officers:
President: Steve Carmean - K9DY
Vice President: Dave Daily – KB9LOT
Secretary: Robert Jones – KC9NJM
Treasurer: Jacki Frederick – KI6QOG
Repeater Trustee: Jay Chrismon – AA9YP

Weekly Net: Sunday evening 7:00 PM ARES/RACES members and ALL RADIO AMATEURS

The Official Newsletter of the Mid-State Amateur Radio Club

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Editor: Robert LaGrange N9SIU

Please send your articles to my email n9siu@yahoo.com no later than the 3rd of the month

